

Exhibit features 'Dean of Mormon Art'

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Called to the Hawaiian Islands as a missionary during the construction of the Hawaii Temple, Stewart was assigned to paint murals in that temple. Later, he painted murals in the Cardston, Alberta, and Mesa, Ariz., temples.

"One of my greatest joys has been painting in the temples in Canada, Arizona and Hawaii," he said. "It was an inspiring opportunity to do those paintings."

As did many other artists of his and earlier generations, Stewart had to struggle to become the great artist he is today. Growing up in Richfield in south-central Utah, he never even saw an oil painting until he was 10, when he went with his family to the Utah State Fair in 1901. He was 20 before he completed his first oil painting.

"When I was a just a kid, I was out drawing with a pencil," he said. "In fact, I made drawings in school and got my fingers rapped. That's what they used to do. They'd say, 'Get on the job and do

your arithmetic' and then rap your fingers."

But one teacher, Sophia Gulbranson, recognized his talent and gave him colored chalk with which to draw pictures on the schoolroom's blackboard.

His mother died in 1902. His father died in 1911, within a few weeks after LeConte's graduation from Ricks Academy in Rexburg, Idaho, where he and his father had lived since moving there in 1906. His father remarried the year before they moved to Idaho. Although his father had become a successful attorney, he left no will; LeConte inherited nothing. He then came to Salt Lake City, living in a room provided by an uncle, William M. Stewart, dean of education at the University of Utah. His uncle helped him get a teaching job in Murray, Utah.

"After a couple of years, the art bug in my head began to itch and burn," he said in an interview. "Maybe it was because I had painted a few oils from the scenes around Murray. I told my uncle I wanted to go to New York. He didn't discourage me. That June I got on the train and with high hopes went to the Art Students

League at Woodstock, N.Y., to continue my studies."

That fall, he enrolled in the league's school in New York City. He had saved nearly all his salary as a teacher, but to supplement it he painted stage scenery for a Broadway theater, worked as an usher and stagehand and was a waiter in restaurants. He lived in a windowless apartment and, when his money was nearly gone, ate mostly beans and bread.

After a year, he returned to Utah, discovering his uncle had recently died. He again had no home. He moved into a cheap apartment and, upon discovering he could not make a living as an artist in Salt Lake City, returned to teaching school in Kaysville. There, he met Zipporah Layton. After they became engaged, he was called on his mission, arriving in Hawaii in June 1917. When the architect of the Hawaii Temple, which was then under construction, discovered the missionary's talent as an artist, he requested he be allowed to paint temple murals. Stewart was transferred from being a proselyting missionary to being called to

a work mission.

In the meantime, Zipporah was called to teach in the Church school in Hawaii, arriving there in September of that year. With permission from President Joseph F. Smith, they were married before she began her mission. They later were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple.

They made their home in Kaysville, where they lived together until her death last spring.

For 18 years, he was chairman of the art department at the University of Utah from 1938 to 1956.

Stewart continues to paint. Having renewed his driver's license a week after his wife's funeral, he drives around, looking for the right scenes. Then, with a hand still steady despite his years, and eyesight so keen he easily reads signs along roadsides, he begins to sketch.

And ever a teacher, he delights, inspires and enthralls small groups of students who cluster around him three times a week during summers and Saturday afternoons in the spring and fall for instruction.

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an area geologist for an oil company, former high counselor, bishop, bishop's counselor and elders quorum president.

Missionaries, members safe in Mexican blast

MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

No missionaries or members were injured by the giant explosion Nov. 20 that rocked the northeast corner of Mexico City and killed more than 300 people.

However, four stake centers were used to house 270 evacuated residents, 70 of whom were members, said Elder Ted E. Brewerton, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy and of the presidency of the Mexico-Central America Area. Two stakes provided food for the residents.

The Brewertons were in Mexico City when the 5:42 a.m. explosion occurred. "The explosion woke us, as we were about 15 miles away," said Elder Brewerton.

He said the Mexico City Aragon Stake immediately organized to distribute food, clothing and blankets to those affected by the explosion.